THE DIVINE INVITATION

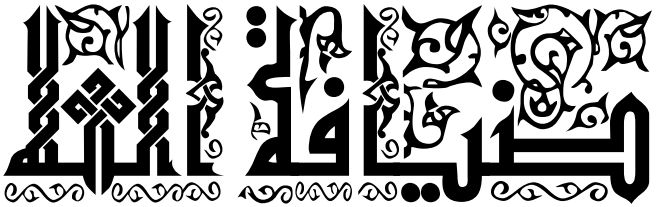
A Short Treatise on the Month of Ramadhan

Muhammad M. Khalfan

The Divine Invitation

THE DIVINE INVITATION

A SHORT TREATISE ON THE MONTH OF RAMADHAN



Muhammad M. Khalfan

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 1-898449-78-3

© Copyright 2005 the World Federation of KSIMC

Published by
The Islamic Education Board of the
World Federation of Khoja Shia Ithna-Asheri Muslim Communities
Registered Charity in the UK No. 282303
Islamic Centre - Wood Lane
Stanmore, Middlesex, United Kingdom, HA7 4LQ
www.world-federation.org/ieb
ieb@world-federation.org

Canada Sales and Distribution
Islāmic Humanitarian Service · 81 Hollinger Crescent
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, N2K 2Y8 · Tel: 519-576-7111 · Fax: 519-576-8378
ihs@primus.ca · www.al-haqq.com

USA Sales and Distribution
Darul Tabligh North America · 786 Summa Avenue
Westbury, NY, USA, 11590 · Tel: 516-334-2479 · Fax: 516-334-2624
www.darultabligh.org · info@darultabligh.org

Africa Sales & Distribution
Tabligh Sub Committtee - K.S.I. Jamāʾat – Dar Es Salaam
P.O. Box 233, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania · Tel: 255-22-211-5119 Fax: 255-22-211-3107
tabligh@raha.com · www.dartabligh.org

All rights reserved. The use of this publication reproduced, transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, or stored in a retrieval system, without prior written consent of the publisher except in the case of brief quotations quoted in articles or reviews is an infringement of the copyright law.

Printed in Canada
By Webcom Limited – www.webcomlink.com

I humbly present this short treatise to the Doyen of Saints, Imām ʿAlī علیه‌السلام who left this mortal world to Meet the Only Beloved.

Holy Month of Ramaḍān 1425 AH
Holy Proximity of Bibi Ma'sumah علیهاالسلام
Qum al-Muqaddasah

Contents

Preface 11
Lexical Origins 16
The General Banquet 19
The Special Banquet 21
Spiritual Food 24
Mystics are Guests of Allāh 27
A Closer Look at the Meaning of Ḍiyāfat Allāh 28
The General Fast 34
The Specific Fast 37
The Most Specific Fast 40
Have You Considered the Lovers in the Cave? 45
Bibliography 49

TRANSLITERATION TABLE

The method of transliteration of Islamic terminology from the Arabic language has been carried out according to the standard transliteration table mentioned below.

ء	ʾ	ض	ḍ
ا	a	ط	ṭ
ب	b	ظ	ẓ
ت	t	ع	ʿ
ث	th	غ	gh
ج	j	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	k	ك	k
د	d	ل	l
ذ	dh	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	ه	h
س	s	و	w
ش	sh	ي	y
ص	ṣ		

Long Vowels		Short Vowels	
ا	ā	ـَـ	a
و	ū	ـُـ	u
ي	ī	ـِـ	i

ﷻ - Free from Imperfections and Exalted is He

ﷺ - Prayers be upon him and his family

عليه السلام - Peace be upon him

عليها السلام - Peace be upon her

PREFACE

Each year, as we approach the Graceful Month of Ramaḍān, we are considered as the 'Special Guests' of Allah ﷻ. What does it mean to be a special guest? What is the difference between an 'ordinary' invitation and a 'special' invitation? Why is the Holy Month of Ramaḍān described by the Holy Prophet ﷺ as 'The Banquet of Allāh'?

This book goes beyond providing logical analysis to these questions. It is typical of the style the author adopts in his other profound titles for a spiritual wayfarer 'Soaring to the Only Beloved' (a brief treatise on the presence of the heart in prayer) and 'Manifestations of the All-Merciful' (a commentary on a daily supplication of the Holy Month of Ramadan), published by the Islamic Education Board of the World Federation.

Such an approach is ideal for Mubalighīn, proactive ʿUrafāʾ and the youth, for it combines beautifully the theme with lexical origins, Āyāt from the Holy Qurʾān , aḥādīth of the Aʾimmah ﷺ, mystical narrations, poetry, faḍāil of the Ahlu'l Bayt ﷺ as well as touch of historical accounts relevant to the subject.

We live in a time when people feel an urgent need to examine the spiritual dimensions of their lives. The materialistic tendencies which have dominated so much of the modern age are beginning to lose their lustre. People are beginning to realize that their deepest needs cannot be satisfied by consumer products. This book together with a series of related books can go a long way to quench the thirst of spiritual wayfarers and be a catalyst in guiding the traveler towards 'The Host'.

IEB is indebted to Sheikh Muḥammad Khalfan who is also an active member of the Editorial Advisory Committee (EAC) that was recently established by the World Federation to ensure high quality, sustainable and effective publications.

Sheikh Muḥammad Khalfan studies at the Seminary in Qum specialising in philosophy and theoretical gnosis. Besides the three books mentioned above, he has also translated various articles on philosophical issues for the Transcendent Philosophy Journal (published by the Islamic Centre London) as well as the introduction of the Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-Karīm of

Mullā Ṣadra (written by the esteemed research scholar Aghā Bidār Far) for the same institution.

Safder Jaffer
Chairman
Islamic Education Board
The World Federation of KSIMC
London

Ramaḍān 1426 AH

THE HOLY MONTH OF RAMAḌHĀN

A Month When Allāh's Servants are Invited to be His Special Guests

---

The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

...وَهُوَ شَهْرٌ دُعِيتُمْ فِيهِ إِلَى ضِيَافَةِ اللّٰهِ...

"...It is a month in which you have been called to the banquet of Allāh..."[1]

Whenever we speak of ḍiyāfah, we refer to the invitation commonly known and highly encouraged in Islam. Our traditions are replete with emphasis on inviting the believers and feeding them in the way of Allāh ﷻ. In fact a guest is also commonly known as 'the beloved of God'. So much emphasis has Islam laid upon such invitation, that there is a prophetic tradition that says:

أَلضَّيْفُ دَلِيلُ الْجَنَّةِ.

"A guest is a guide to Paradise."[2]

In other words, serving a guest is so rewarding that it leads one to Paradise. This dictum also informs us that our hospitality should be such that it should qualify for such a reward. In other words, our invitation should not involve things that instead of making us closer to Allāh ﷻ, separate us from His neighborhood.

In another tradition narrated from the Holy Prophet ﷺ, 'disliking a guest' is equated to disliking Allāh ﷻ:

...إِنَّ مَنْ أَبْغَضَ الضَّيْفَ فَقَدْ أَبْغَضَ اللّٰهَ، وَمَنْ أَبْغَضَ اللّٰهَ أَبْغَضَهُ اللّٰهُ...

"...surely whosoever hates a guest, hates Allāh, and whosoever hates

---

[1] *al-Iqbāl*, vol. 1, pg. 26

[2] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 75, pp. 460-461

Allāh, Allāh [likewise] Hates him..."[3]

Those who assume a Divine spirit always love guests. One of the most outstanding prophets of Allāh well-known for his great fondness of serving guests is Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ. History tells us that he would not eat any of his meals until he found a guest to eat with. At times he would have to travel one or two miles away just for this purpose. Due to his great fondness for guests, he was called Abū Aḍyāf. Imām al-Ṣādiq ﷺ is reported to have said: 'Indeed Ibrāhīm was Abā Aḍyāf (lit. father of guests); and whenever he had no guest, he would go out searching for them[4]. He is also known to be the first Prophet of Allāh[5] to have served a guest. Imām ʿAlī ﷺ is reported to have said:

كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ أَوَّلَ مَنْ أَضَافَ الضَّيْفَ...

"Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ was the first to host a guest..."[6]

Perhaps the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the infallible Imāms of the Ahl al-Bayt ﷺ highly encouraged the believers to invite each other for iftār in the Holy month of Ramaḍān was to adopt a Divine Attitude in themselves: In the same way as He has invited His believers to His Banquet and venerated them as well, His followers should adopt the same attitude. A very important point to bear in mind is that every invitation should accompany veneration (ikrām). In several traditions the phrase 'ikrām al-ḍayf' has often been mentioned. This means that no ordinary entertainment is encouraged. One must struggle to observe 'ikrām' (lit. veneration). The Holy Qurʾān alluding to this trait of Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ says:

---

[3] *al-Maḥajjat al-Bayḍāʾ*, vol. 3, pg. 32

[4] *Tafsīr Nūr al-Thaqalayn*, vol. 1, pg. 555

[5] It should be noted that 'first' here is in terms of time. Otherwise, it is the Muḥammadan light in terms of the existential hierarchy, who by Divine permission, is the first host. This again is in terms of the world of 'contingent existence'. Otherwise there is none save Allāh Who is and was and will be the Host, and 'a second' to such a Host cannot be comprehended at all.

[6] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 12, pg. 4

﴿ هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ ضَيْفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ ﴾

"Did you receive the story of Abraham's honored guests?"[7]

Some exegetes of Qurʾān allude to the fact that the adjective '*al-mukramīn*' in the above verse possibly signifies that the guests of Ibrāhīm were honored by him and hence are qualified as 'honored'[8].

Veneration should be manifested in all the levels of the invitation. We should therefore identify 'the etiquette of the intention of our invitation', 'the method of invitation', 'the banquet served in the invitation', 'the method of serving the banquet', 'where should the meal be served', etc. Islam has the answers to all these queries. Veneration in the phases of every invitation, however, does not mean that one should overspend to ensure that the best meal is served. It rather means to serve within the bounds of the *sharīʿah* according to one's capacity. It is noteworthy that when some of the poor companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him whether they would be deprived of the reward of invitation if they cannot bear the expenses of hosting a muʾmin brother in this holy month, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Protect yourself from Hell Fire even with a piece of date or a glass of water', thus indicating that it is not necessary for one to serve what is beyond one's capacity. This however should not lead one who can afford to serve a decent meal to decide that he can be the host of so many believers by distributing dates in the mosque, and thereby earn much more reward than if he were to call one muʾmin brother and serve a decent meal at home. In short, one should serve according to his financial capacity.

One of the most significant attitudes we must adopt is to create a meaningful environment in our invitations. Not only should physical food be served, intellectual and spiritual food should also be served. Able speakers on significant issues that deal with self-reform or reforming the society can be invited to serve such spiritual meals. It is then that we may be able to claim to have adopted a Divine attitude in this holy

---

[7] Holy Qur'ān, 15:24

[8] See *Tafsīr Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, vol. 9, pg. 23 and *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*, vol. 4, pg. 401

month. In fact, the great scholars of gnosis have clearly stated that 'the Divine Banquet' to which the believers have been called in the Holy month of Ramaḍān is 'a spiritual' repast.

In order to capture an accurate concept of the relation between the host and the guest, it would be useful for us to have a cursory glance over how lexicographers define this relation:

Lexical Origins

Ḍayf (lit. inclination) is an infinitive noun of the intransitive verbs ḍāfa, yaḍīfū (lit. he inclined, he is inclining)[9]; and a guest is known as ḍayf because he inclines to the host as he alights to be his guest[10]. The word ḍīyāfah likewise is an infinitive noun, and it signifies 'the entertainment of a guest or guests'. And the word 'al-iḍāfah' is conventionally employed in grammar when a noun is adjoined to another. Some authoritative lexicographers such as Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī say that 'a guest is known to be ḍayf because he is adjoined to the family and fed with them'.[11] Such linkage however is voluntary and attributive (iʿtibārī) and not ḥaqīqī (real). In sharp contrast to this, the relation of a guest of Allāh is such that he not only is existentially linked to the Him but is 'the link' (ʿayn al-rabṭ) itself. This is because he has no independent existence, or accurately speaking, no existence of his own. Whatever he is, together with his belongings, all exist and subsist by the volition of Allāh ﷻ. The following verse of the Qurʾān alludes to this reality:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ ﴾

"O mankind! You are the ones who stand in need of Allāh, and Allāh, He is the All-Sufficient, the All-Laudable."[12]

Philosophers describe the link between the guests and the Host as iḍāfah

---

[9] It is also employed to mean, 'he alighted to be a guest'. For example, when it is said '*aḍīfuhu*' it means 'I alighted at his abode as a guest.'

[10] *Mufradātu Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, pg. 513

[11] Lane, EW Lane's Arabic-English Lexicon

[12] Holy Qur'ān, 35:15

ishrāqiyyah (emanational link), thus differentiating it from iḍāfah maʿqūliyyah (categorical link), which is between two independent entities.

In his glosses over his philosophical poetry al-Manẓūmah, Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī says:

...الا ترى أنّ كلّ وجود عين التعلق بالمبدء وليس إضافة مقولية، وللمبدء أضافة إشراقية على جميع ما سواه...

"...Don't you see that every entity is 'sheer linkage to the Origin' (ʿayn al-taʿalluq bi al-Mabdaʿ) and not categorically linked, and everything other than the Origin is His emanational link...."[13]

In simpler terms, unlike the human beings, where the host, the guest, as well as the banquet served to the host are apparently[14] independent, there is no 'independent existence' for other than Allāh ﷻ. Therefore, He is the Host of the guest, who is served hospitably with contingent existence and subsistence.[15] The relation is rather subtler than that, for there can be no two independent existents ever conceived. The guest together with what he or she is provided with is nothing but Divine action. The Holy Qurʾān says:

﴿ وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴾

"And God has created you and whatever you do."[16]

---

[13] *al-Manẓūmah*, vol. 2, pg. 468

[14] We say 'apparently' because 'the humanly host, guest, as well as the banquet' all come under contingent existence, which has no dependence whatsoever. Hence in reality there isn't and can never be any host in the independent sense of the word other than Allāh ﷻ.

[15] This can be understood by trying to appreciate the relation between the Primary Cause and every dependent being in the universe. The relation is not like the human builder and his building, who after having built a beautiful edifice, is able to live independent of the edifice and has no existential control over the same, nor does the building need him to exist. If he were to die, the building would still remain erect.

[16] Holy Qur'ān, 37:96. This is one of the most explicit verses that endorses the

Another highly significant point to bear in mind is that this kind of hospitality is essentially continual. Because of the utter existential poverty of the human being, he always needs to be provided with his contingent existence[17] and its perfections, and thus is always a guest of the Necessary Being. Both the philosophers as well as the mystics (ʿurafā') establish that every entity requires Divine Grace every moment.

Perhaps the following supplications allude to this subtlety:

1. On Thursday nights we are taught to recite the following ten times:

يَا دَائِمَ الْفَضْلِ عَلَـــىٰ الْبَرِيَّةِ...

"O One who continually confers abundance on the creation..."[18]

2. In the supplication of Jawshan al-Kabīr we address Almighty Allāh as:

...يَا دَائِمَ اللُّطْفِ...

"...O Ever Benevolent..."[19]

3. On Eid day, in one of the supplications we are taught to say:

يَا دَائِمَ الْمَعْرُوفِ...

"O One who always does good..."[20]

4. And in one of the recommended supplications on the 18th Day of every

---

belief accepted by the Imāmites who neither believe that they are coercively driven by Allāh ﷻ in every action they do, nor believe that they have complete independence in their action. They rather believe that whatever they do is volitional, but entirely by Allāh's ﷻ power. Note the subtlety that while the action is attributed to the doer (*taʿmalūn*), Allāh ﷻ says that He is the One who Creates the action chosen by His servant.

[17] Contingent beings are those that do not exist essentially nor are they impossible to exist. Therefore in order for them to exist, they always need a cause. All the created beings are such.

[18] *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān*, vol. 1, pg. 33

[19] *Al-Balad al-Amīn*, vol. 1, pg. 405

[20] *al-Iqbāl*, vol. 2, pg. 212

month we are taught to address Almighty Allāh as:

يَا دَائِمَ الْجُوْدِ وَالْكَرَمِ...

"O Ever Bountiful & Generous..."[21]

Some Jews, as narrated in the Holy Qurʾān, in their utter ignorance and disrespect would say 'God's Hands are tied', thus implying the independence of the creation from the Creator[22], an idea later adopted by a group of ignorant Muʿtazilites who relinquishing the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt ﷺ deviated from the right path. The reality, however, as has been established in the relevant texts, is that the relation between the cause and effect is not like the relation of a builder and a building, both of which can exist independently. Rather, the effect always needs the cause to exist.

Having considered the aforesaid introduction, we can classify 'Divine Invitation' (ḍiyāfah ilāhiyyah) into two kinds:

1. al-Ḍiyāfah al-'Āmmah (The General Banquet)
2. al-Ḍiyāfah al-Khāṣah (The Specific Banquet)

The General Banquet

This refers to the Divine banquet that every human being enjoys. Rather every created entity seeks advantage from its provisions. Every entity, both in its existence, as well as subsistence needs the All-Sufficient. Therefore, he always enjoys from the provisions of the All-Merciful.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

...إِنَّ مَنْ فِي الدُّنْـــيَا ضَيْفٌ، وَمَا فِي أَيْدِيهِمْ عَارِيَةٌ...

"...Surely the inhabitants of the earth are guests and whatever they have

---

[21] *Al-ʿAdad al-Qawiyyah*, vol. 1, pg. 163

[22] This refers to verse 5:63 of the Holy Qur'ān. Imām Khumaynī has a beautiful note on this issue in his commentary on tradition no. 31 [On the Indescribability of God] of his *Forty Traditions*.

at their disposal are loans..."[23]

Similarly, Imām ʿAlī ﷺ says in one of his sermons:

عِبَادَ اللّٰهِ إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَأْمُلُونَ– مِنْ هٰذِهِ الدُّنْـــيَا أَثْوِيَاءُ مُؤَجَّلُونَ.

"O servants of Allāh, surely your beings and what you aspire from this world are guests (athwiyāʾ)[24] for whom a time for departure has been specified..."[25]

Therefore the human beings, rather every dependent entity, is a guest of Allāh ﷻ. Appreciating this, al-Bayātī in his Adab al-Ḍiyāfah says:

ألضيافة في الدين خُلق من أخلاق الله سبحانه وتعالى الذي استضاف مخلوقاته في عالم الوجود بالمعنى الواسع للكلمة. وهو يستضيف عباده كل يوم في مملكته. ويدعوهم إلى طيب أرزاقه...

"Inviting a guest in religion is a trait among the traits of Allāh, the Immaculate and Exalted, Who entertains His creatures in the world of existence in the broad sense of the word. He caters for His servants every day in His Dominion, and invites them to His pleasant sustenance..."[26]

This kind of invitation is in reality a manifestation of Allāh's All-comprehensive Mercy (al-Raḥmah al-Raḥmāniyyah), about which the Holy Qurʾān says:

﴿ وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ﴾

"...but My mercy embraces all things..."[27]

---

[23] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 77, pg. 187

[24] *Athwiyāʾ* is the plural of thawī which in the Arabic is 'a guest' (Ibn Maytham al-Baḥrānī, *Ikhtiyāru Miṣbāh al-Sālikīn*, pg. 287

[25] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, sermon 129

[26] *Adab al-Ṣiyāfah*, pg. 13

[27] Holy Qur'ān, 7:156

The Special Banquet

This kind of invitation takes place on specific occasions. It manifests Allāh's ﷻ special Mercy which despite given to all, is accepted and benefited from, only by the believers. This kind of Mercy is also known as al-raḥmah al-raḥīmiyyah, which comes in the first verse of Sūrat al-Ḥamd: Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm. Following are some noteworthy extensions (maṣādīq) of the special Divine banquet:

1. Special invitation in the Holy month of Ramaḍān

The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

...وَهُوَ شَهْرٌ دُعِيتُمْ فِيهِ إِلَى ضِيَافَةِ اللّٰهِ...

"...It is a month in which you have been called to the Banquet of Allāh..."[28]

Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ؑ is reported to have said:

...شَهْرُ رَمَضَانِ شَهْرُ رَمَضَانِ وَالصَّائِمُوْنَ فِيهِ أَضْيَافُ اللّٰهِ...

"...The month of Ramaḍān is the month of Ramaḍān, and those who are fasting therein are the guests of Allāh..."[29]

2. Special invitation during Ḥajj and ʿUmrah

Imām al-Ṣādiq ؑ is reported to have said:

إِنَّ ضَيْفَ اللّٰهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ رَجُلٌ حَجَّ وَاعْتَمَرَ، فَهُوَ ضَيْفُ اللّٰهِ حَتّٰى يَرْجِعَ إِلَى مَنْزِلِهِ...

"Surely the guest of Allāh is the one who performs ḥajj and 'umrah until he returns back to his house..."[30]

---

[28] *al-Iqbāl*, vol. 1, pg. 26

[29] *Faḍā'il al-Ashhur al-Thalāthah*, pg. 123

[30] *al-Khiṣāl*, vol. 1, pg. 127

3. Special Invitation during Prayer (ṣalāh)

The above tradition of Imām al-Ṣādiq ﷺ mentions the second kind of guest as:

...وَرَجُلٌ كَانَ فِي صَلاَتِه، فَهُوَ فِي كَـنْفِ اللّٰهِ حَتَّىٰ يَنْصَرِفَ...

"...and one who is in his prayers, and thus under Divine protection, until he leaves his prayer..."[31]

Imām al-Ṣādiq ﷺ is also reported to have said:

مَنْ صَلَّىٰ صَلاَةً فَرِيضَةً وَعَقَّبَ إِلـىٰ أُخْرَىٰ فَهُوَ ضَيْفُ اللّٰهِ، وَحَقٌّ عَلَىٰ اللّٰهِ أَنْ يُكْرِمَ ضَيْفَهُ...

"Whosoever prays an obligatory prayer and follows it with another, then he is a guest of Allāh, and it is upon Allāh to venerate His guest..."[32]

Imām Ḥasan al-Mujtabā ﷺ was known to say the following whenever he would reach the door of the mosque:

إِلٰـهِي ضَيْفُكَ بِـبَابِكَ، يَا مُحْسِنُ قَدْ أَتَاكَ الْمُسِيءُ، فَتَجَاوَزْ عَنْ قَبِيحِ مَا عِنْدِي بِجَمِيلِ مَا عِنْدَكَ يَا كَرِيـمُ.

"O God, Your guest is at Your door; O Virtuous One, certainly the bad doer has come to you; so overlook the ugliness that I possess with the beauty that is with You, O Noble One."[33]

This perhaps reveals that whenever one is in the mosque, one is in reality the special guest of Allāh.

4. Special Invitation for those Obedient to Allāh

Ibn Fahd al-Ḥillī in his ʿUddat al-Dāʿī narrates a sacred tradition (al-ḥadīth

---

[31] *Ibid.*

[32] *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, pg. 241

[33] *al-Anwār al-Bahiyyah*, pg. 87

al-qudsī) in which Almighty Allāh tells Prophet Dāwūd ﷺ the following:

أَهْلُ طَاعَـــتِي فِي ضِيَافَـــتِي.

"The obedient people are My guests..."[34]

5. Special Invitation to the Rememberers of Allāh

The Holy Prophet ﷺ in a sacred tradition is reported to have said:

وَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ سُبْحَانَهُ يَقُولُ أَهْلُ ذِكْرِي فِي ضِيَافَتِي...

"And surely Allāh, free is He from imperfections, Says: Those who remember Me are My guests...."[35]

6. Special Invitation to those who Study the Holy Qur'ān in the Mosque

The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

...مَا جَلَسَ قَوْمٌ فِي بَيْتٍ مِنْ بُـــيُوتِ اللّٰهِ، يَدْرُسُونَ كِتَابَ اللّٰهِ، وَيَتَعَاطَوْنَهُ بَيْـــنَهُمْ إِلاَّ كَانُوا أَضْـــيَافَ اللّٰهِ تَعَالـــىٰ، وَأَظَلَّتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلاَئِكَةُ بِأَجْنِحَتِهَا مَا دَامُوا فِيهِ، حَتَّىٰ يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ...

"No people sit in a house from among the houses of Allāh studying the Book of Allāh and exchanging information between themselves, save that the Angels place a shade over them by their wings until they engage in talking about something else..."[36]

7. Special Invitation for one who Visits His Mu'min brother in the way of Allāh

It is reported in a tradition that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ زَارَ أَخَاهُ فِي بَيْتِهِ قَالَ اللّٰهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَهُ: أَنْتَ ضَيْفِي وَزَائِرِي، عَلَيَّ

---

[34] *'Uddat al-Dā'ī*, pg. 252

[35] *Irshād al-Qulūb*, pg. 58

[36] *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, vol. 3, pg. 313

قِرَاكَ، وَقَدْ أَوْجَبْتُ لَكَ الْجَنَّةَ بِحُبِّكَ إِيَّاهُ...

"Whosoever visits his brother at his home, (in the way of Allāh), Allāh, the Invincible and Majestic, Says: 'You are My guest and My visitor, and I am bound to entertain you; and surely I have made Paradise obligatory on you through your love for him..."[37]

8. Special Invitation for the zā'ir (visitor) of Imām al-Ḥusayn عليه السلام

In one of the ziyārāt of Imām al-Ḥusayn عليه السلام, we are taught to address him saying:

يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللّٰه: أَنَا ضَيْفُ اللّٰه وَضَيْفُكَ، وَجَارُ اللّٰه وَجَارُكَ، وَلِكُلِّ ضَيْفٍ وَجَارٍ قِرًى، وَقِرَايَ فِي هٰذَا الْوَقْتِ أَنْ تَسْأَلَ اللّٰهَ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى أَنْ يَرْزُقَنِي فَكَاكَ رَقَبَتِي مِنَ النَّارِ، إِنَّهُ سَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ ...

"O Abā ʿAbdillāh, I am the guest of Allāh and your guest as well, and Allāh is my refuge; and you too are my refuge; and for every guest and seeker of refuge there is a banquet; please therefore make my banquet be at this moment that you ask Allāh to provide me with freedom from Hell Fire; surely He is All-Hearing of Prayer..."[38]

Spiritual Food

These examples inform us that Allāh's ﷻ special invitation does not always concern material satisfaction. The food that Allāh ﷻ serves in the aforementioned specific invitations are spiritual. In fact in some traditions the word 'ṭaʿām'[39] is translated as spiritual food. Consider the following:

In chapter ʿAbasa [80:24], Almighty Allāh says:

---

[37] *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, pg. 176

[38] *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān*, pg. 292

[39] The verb *ṭaʿima* literally stands for 'he tasted'.

﴿ فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ إِلَىٰ طَعَامِهِ ﴾

"Then let man look at his food."[40]

Under this holy verse, the Shiʿite exegete Sayyid Hāshim Bahrānī, in his Tafsīr al-Burhān quotes a tradition narrated by Thiqat al-Islam al-Kulaynī in al-Kāfi [v. 1, p. 39, tr. 8] from Imām al-Ṣādiq ﷺ as follows:

Zayd al-Shaḥḥām asks Imām ﷺ what "man's food" stands for in the verse above. The Imām ﷺ responds saying:

عِلْمُهُ الَّذِي يأْخُذُهُ عَمَّنْ يَأْخُذُهُ.

"It refers to the knowledge that he acquires, and its source."

The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

أَبِيتُ عِنْدَ رَبِّي، يُطْعِمُنِي وَيَسْقِينِي.

"I spend the night near my Lord, and He feeds me and quenches my thirst."

Commenting on this prophetic tradition, Sayyid ʿAlī Khān al-Madanī in his magnum opus, Riyāḍ al-Sālikīn says:

ومعلوم أنّ طعامه (صلّى الله عليه وآله) عند ربّه ليس من جنس أطعمة الحيوانات اللحميّة، ولا شرابه من جنس هذه الأشربة، وإنّما المراد طعام العلم وشراب المعرفة.

"And it is known that the Prophet's food near his Lord is not of the kind of animal food, nor is his drink like the drinks that we see before us. Indeed what is meant here is only the ṭaʿām (food) of knowledge and the sharāb (drink) of gnosis (maʿrifah)."[41]

'Allāmah Majlisī also, commenting on this tradition says in his Oceans of Lights:

---

[40] Holy Qur'ān, 80:124

[41] *Riyād al-Sālikīn*, vol. 1, pg. 280

...ولا شك أن ذلك الشراب ليس إلا عبارة عن المعرفة و المحبة والإستنارة بأنوار عالم الغيب...

"...and undoubtedly that drink is nothing but Divine gnosis, love, and seeking illumination through the lights of the hidden realm..."[42]

The infinitive noun 'shurb' also, which is commonly translated as 'drinking' does not literally mean 'to drink'. Drinking is only a material extension of 'shurb'- which literally denotes "to convey to one's inside"[43] be that by drinking[44] or otherwise. The Holy Qurʾān for example, uses shurb for the polytheists who inclined to the worship of a cow after Prophet Mūsā ﷺ went to be the special guest of Allāh ﷻ, in the following way:

﴿ وَأُشْرِبُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْعِجْلَ بِكُفْرِهِمْ ﴾

"...and their hearts had been imbued with [the love of] the Calf, due to their faithlessness."[45]

Observe that the word 'ushribū' is employed which does not connote any kind of material intake of drink.

Imām al-Sajjād ﷺ in his supplication against Satan says:

أَللّٰهُمَّ وَ أَشْرِبْ قُلُوبَنَا إِنْكَارَ عَمَلِهِ وَالْطُفْ لَنَا فِي نَقْضِ حِيَلِهِ.

"O Allāh, saturate our hearts with the rejection of his works and be gentle to us by destroying his stratagems!"[46]

And in his supplication of ʿArafah he ﷺ says:

وَأَشْرِبْ قَلْبِي عِنْدَ ذُهُولِ الْعُقُولِ طَاعَتَكَ.

---

[42] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 6, pg. 208

[43] *al-Taḥqīq fī Kalimāt al-Qurʾān al-Karīm,* vol. 6, pg. 30

[44] EW Lane, *EW Lane Arabic-English Lexicon*, see under the root word *shīn rā bā*

[45] Holy Qur'ān, 2:93

[46] Imām al-Sajjād ﷺ, *Ṣaḥīfat al-Sajjādiyyah (Eng. Edition)*, sup. 17, pg. 63

"Drench my heart with Your obedience when intellects are distracted..."[47]

And Imām ʿAlī ﷺ is reported to have said:

إِنَّ لِلّٰهِ تَعَالَـــىٰ شَرَابًا لأَوْلِيَائِهِ إِذَا شَرِبُوا (مِنْهُ) سَكِرُوا، وَإِذَا سَكِرُوا طَرِبُوا، وَإِذَا طَرِبُوا طَابُوا، وَإِذَا طَابُوا ذَابُوا، وَإِذَا ذَابُوا خَلَصُوا، وَإِذَا خَلَصُوا طَلَبُوا، وَإِذَا طَلَبُوا وَجَدُوا، وَإِذَا وَجَدُوا وَصَلُوا، وَإِذَا وَصَلُوا اتَّصَلُوا، وَإِذَا اتَّصَلُوا لاَ فَرْقَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ حَبِيـــبِهِمْ.

"Indeed Allāh has a wine for His friends, which if they drink, they get intoxicated, and when they get intoxicated, they get overjoyed, and when they get overjoyed they get pleasant, and when they get pleasant, they melt down, and when they melt down, they get pure, and when they get pure, they seek, and when they seek, they find, and when they find they reach, and when they reach, they unite, and when they unite there is no difference between them and their lover."[48]

Mystics are Guests of Allāh

Some mystics like Ibn al-ʿArabī consider the ṣūfīs (those who possess the purity of heart and have attained proximity to God) to be the guests of Allāh ﷻ. In his Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah he says:

ألصوفية أضياف الله، فإنهم سافروا من حظوظ أنفسهم وجميع الاكوان إيثاراً للجناب الإلهي، فنزلوا به، فلا يعملون عملاً إلا بإذن من نزلوا عليه، وهو الله، فلا يتصرفون ولا يسكنون ولا يتحركون إلا عن أمر إلهي، ومن ليست هذه صفته فهو في الطريق يمشي يقطع مناهل نفسه حتى يصل إلى ربه، فحينئذ يكون ضيفاً...

"'The mystics (al-ṣūfiyyah) are guests of Allāh, for they journeyed from

---

[47] *Ibid.*, sup. 47, pg. 185

[48] This tradition has been narrated by many authorities in *mysticism* such as Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī in his *Sharḥ al-Asmā'* (pg. 534), Ayatullāh Ḥasan Zadeh Amulī in his *Nūr ʿalā Nūr* (pg. 89), Mawlā Narāqī in his *Jāmiʿ al-Saʿādāt* (vol. 3, pg. 152)

the pleasures of their lower self and everything in sacrifice for the neighborhood of God; so they alighted in His neighborhood, and hence do not perform any action save by the permission of He, Whose neighborhood they alighted as guests, and that is Allāh; therefore they do not do anything, nor settle down, nor move save by the Divine Command; and one who does not have such a character, he is [still] walking on the way, crossing the springs of his self until he reaches his Lord, and then it is when he is a guest..."'[49]

A Closer Look at the Meaning of Ḍiyāfat Allāh

Almighty Allāh is referred to in the verses of the Holy Qurʾān with different names. Sometimes He is introduced with 'Huwa' (He)[50], sometimes with 'Allāh'[51], sometimes with 'Rabb'[52] and so on. All these names manifest a certain meaning, which if overlooked may hamper one from understanding the verse perfectly. Authoritative exegetes of Qurʾān have alluded to this fine reality in their works.[53] Likewise the Ahl al-Bayt ﷺ, who represent the guardians of Qurʾān, and appreciate its kernel, also employ every Divine Name for the purpose of referring to a certain Attribute of Allāh ﷻ. For example, in the aforementioned prophetic tradition the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'I spend the night near my Lord (ʿinda Rabbī)...' Here the name 'Lord' (Rabb) is specifically employed and thus it refers to the aspect of God's Lordship, an extension of which is to perfect and train the human beings. In addition, it also alludes to 'his state of perfection' in particular. The first person pronoun "yā" in Rabbī (رَبِّيْ) alludes to this subtlety. Therefore, the food and drink in the tradition must be in harmony with what would confer excellence to the Prophet ﷺ. Obviously in his case we speak of higher excellence, for the path towards Absolute Excellence never ends.

---

[49] *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, vol. 9, pg. 416

[50] Holy Qur'ān, 112:1

[51] *Ibid.*, 2:255

[52] *Ibid.*, 1:2

[53] This can be tangibly observed in the excellent exegesis of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāʾṭabāʾi's *Tafsīr al-Mīzān.*

With regard to Ḍiyāfat Allāh, the name 'Allāh' is employed. The name Allāh is an all-comprehensive Name of God which exemplifies all His Perfect Attributes. That is why it is also known as al-ism al-aʿẓam (the Greatest Name). Its origin is commonly known to be the transitive verb 'alaha' (he worshipped). Hence it signifies 'The Worshipped One' or 'One Who is worthy of worship'. Consequently, the spiritual food in the month of Ramaḍān is one that makes us true worshippers of Almighty Allāh, those who exemplify all His Sublime Names (al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā) in themselves. In one of his sermons, Imām al-Khumaynī alludes to this subtlety saying:

چه بگوییم در مقابل این نعمت بزرگ الهی که ملتها را دعوت کرده است به ضیافه الله ضیافه الله با همه اسماء...

"How can we express our gratitude in return for this great Divine Blessing, for the nations have been called to be the guests of Allāh with all His Names..."[54]

In other words, the Holy month of Ramaḍān is a month of becoming ʿAbdullāh (an obedient servant of Allāh ﷻ). It is a month of adopting the etiquette of Allāh ﷻ in the language of tradition or adopting the Divine Color in the language of the Holy Qurʾān. The Holy Qurʾān says:

﴿ صِبْغَةَ اللّٰهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ صِبْغَةً وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عَابِدُونَ ﴾

"Allāh's Color; and whose color is more pleasant than Allāh's; and He alone do we worship."[55]

And the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

تَخَلَّقُوا بِأَخْلاَقِ اللّٰهِ.

"Adopt the etiquette of Allāh."[56]

---

[54] *Ṣaḥīfeye Imām*, vol. 18, pg. 497

[55] Holy Qur'ān, 2:138

[56] *Sharḥ Duʿā' al-Ṣabāh*, pg. 87

In fact one of the wonderful supplications taught to us by Imām Bāqir al-ʿUlūm ﷺ is Duʿa al-Mubāhilah, in which what we seek are the Beautiful Attributes of Allāh.

ʿAllāmah Ṭabāʾṭabāʾī, the mentor of leading contemporary authorities in ʿirfān, would highly emphasize on reading this duʿā, 'for,' he would say, 'there is no mention of Paradisal men or women in it.' Observe the following verses of this radiant supplication:

أَللّٰهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ بَهَائِكَ بِأَبْهَاهُ وَكُلُّ بَهَائِكَ بَهِيٌّ... أَللّٰهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ عَظَمَتِكَ بِأَعْظَمِهَا وَكُلُّ عَظَمَتِكَ عَظِيمَةٌ، أَللّٰهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ بِعَظَمَتِكَ كُلِّهَا...

"O Allāh I seek from You the kind of Your Brilliance (bahā'ikā) which is the Most Brilliant, and every Brilliance of Yours is Very Brilliant; O Allāh I ask You by Your Brilliance in its entirety....O Allāh I seek from You the kind of Your Greatness which is the Greatest, and every Greatness of Yours is very Great; O Allāh I ask You by Your Greatness in its entirety..."[57]

The contemporary mystic-scholar Āyatullāh Ḥasan Zādeh Āmuli in his treatise 'Light upon Light' while enumerating the requirements of observing good manners in front of Almighty Allāh, says:

دگر ادب مع اللّه اقتضاء می‌کند که از او جز او را نخواهی که این عبادت احباب و احرار است. این امر از بلند همّتی عبد است. کسانی که دون همّت‌اند به وفق دنائت خود طلب دارند. یکی از مشایخ ما – رضوان اللّه تعالی علیه – ما را ترغیب می‌فرمود به مثل دعای سحر حضرت امام محمّد باقر علیه السّلام (اللّهمّ انّی أسألک من بهائک بأبهاه وکلّ بهائک بهیّ...) که در آن بهاء و جمال و جلال و عظمت و نور و رحمت و علم و شرف است و

[57] *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān*, pg. 184

حرفی از حور و غلمان نیست، اگر بهشت شیرین است، بهشت آفرین شیرین تر است.

چرا زاهد اندر هوای بهشت است چرا بیخبر از بهشت آفرین است

"Observing etiquette before Allāh also requires that you do not seek other than Him, for that is the worship of the free men (aḥrār) and lovers (aḥbāb). Such a supplication originates from the exalted aspiration of the servant of God. Those who are lower than this station, ask for their needs according to their lower stages. One of our mentors (may Allāh be pleased with him) would encourage us to read supplications like Duʿā al-Saḥar [another name for duʿā al-mubāhilah] of Ḥaḍrat Imām al-Bāqir عليه السلام: (O Allāh I seek from You the kind of Your Brilliance which is the Most Brilliant...) wherein there is Divine Brilliance, Beauty, Majesty, Greatness, Light, Mercy, Knowledge, Nobility, but no mention about Paradisal damsels (ḥūr) or heavenly youthful male servants (ghilmān). If Paradise is sweet, the Creator of Paradise is sweeter."

Why is the abstinent after Paradise?

Why is he oblivious of the Creator of Paradise?[58]

Later in the same treatise this great mystic quotes Miṣbāḥ al-Sharīʿah, a masterpiece on the secrets of worship attributed to Imām al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام, saying:

لَقَدْ دَعَوْتُ اللّٰهَ فَاسْتَجَابَ لِي، وَنَسِيْتُ الْحَاجَةَ، لأَنَّ اسْتِجَابَتَهُ بِإِقْبَالِه عَلىٰ عَبْدِه عِنْدَ دَعْوَتِهَ أَعْظَمُ وَأَجَلُّ مِمَّا يُرِيدُ مِنْهُ الْعَبْدُ وَلَوْ كَانَتِ الْجَنَّةَ وَنَعِيْمَهَا الْأَبَدَ، وَلٰكِنْ لاَ يَعْقِلُ ذٰلِكَ إِلاَّ الْعَالِمُونَ الْعَابِدُونَ الْمُحِبُّونَ الْعَارِفُونَ، صَفْوَةُ اللّٰهِ وَخَوَاصُّهُ.

Imām al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said: "Indeed I called Allāh and He responded to me,

[58] *Nūrun ʿalā Nūr*, pg. 80

and I forgot my wish, for His Response by giving attention to His servant when he calls upon Him is greater and more magnificent than what the servant wants from Him, even if that be Paradise and its eternal blessings, but none save the Knowledgeable Ones comprehend- those who are worshipful, the Divine lovers, Gnostics, Allāh's choicest and special servants."[59]

We can also say that since the Holy Prophet ﷺ was a perfect manifestation of an obedient slave of Allāh ﷻ, this month is a month of getting closer to the Holy Prophet ﷺ too. Leading mystics have clearly stated that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is a manifestation of the Greatest Name of God - Allāh ﷻ, which means that he manifests in himself all the Divine Attributes. In other words he is ʿAbd of Allāh. We also bear witness to this during every prayer:

أَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ.

"I bear witness that Muḥammad is His Obedient Servant and Messenger."

The Infallible Imāms of the Ahl al-Bayt عليهم السلام likewise personify the Divine Attributes. Imām ʿAlī عليه السلام is reported to have said:

...نَحْنُ الْأَسْمَآءُ الْحُسْنـــىٰ الَّتِي إِذَا سُئِلَ اللّٰهُ تَعَالـــىٰ بِهَا أَجَابَ...

"We (the Ahl al-Bayt) are the Most Beautiful Names of Allāh by which when Almighty Allāh is asked, He Responds."[60]

And it is also reported from Imām al-Bāqir عليه السلام that:

نَحْنُ الْأَسْمَآءُ الْحُسْنـــىٰ الَّذِينَ لاَ يَقْبَلُ اللّٰهُ مِنَ الْعِبَادِ عَمَلاً إِلاَّ بِمَعْرِفَتِنَا.

"We are the Most Beautiful Names of Allāh, and without knowing us, Allāh does not accept any deed of His servants."[61]

In a sermon which he delivered on the first day of the Holy month of

---

[59] *Ibid.*, pg. 81

[60] *Madīnat al-Maʿājiz*, vol. 1, pg. 556

[61] *al-Mukhtaṣar*, pg. 129

Ramaḍān, Imām ʿAlī ﷺ while addressing the fasting ones said:

أَيُّهَا الصَّائِمُ تَدَبَّرْ أَمْرَكَ، فَإِنَّكَ فِي شَهْرِكَ هٰذَا ضَيْفُ رَبِّكَ، أُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ تَكُونُ فِي لَيْلِكَ وَنَهَارِكَ، وَكَيْفَ تَحْفَظْ جَوَارِحَكَ عَنْ مَعَاصِي رَبِّكَ. أُنْظُرْ أَنْ لاَ تَكُونَ بِاللَّيْلِ نَائِمًا وَبِالنَّهَارِ غَافِلاً، فَيَنْقَضِي شَهْرُكَ وَقَدْ بَقِيَ عَلَيْكَ وِزْرُكَ، فَتَكُونَ عِنْدَ إِسْتِيفَاءِ الصَّائِمِيْنَ أُجُورَهُمْ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ، وَعِنْدَ فَوْزِهِمْ بِكَرَامَةٍ مِنَ الْمَحْرُومِينَ، وَعِنْدَ سَعَادَتِهِمْ بِمُجَاوَرَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مِنَ الْمَطْرُودِينَ...

"...O you who are fasting, reflect on your affair, for surely you are a guest of your Lord in this month; observe how your attitude is during the night and day, and how you protect the members of your body from disobeying your Lord; and make sure that you do not sleep through the night and be heedless during the day, so that your month ends while your burden still remains on your shoulders, such that when the fasting ones are paid their due, you are among the losers, and while they enjoy prosperity in the neighborhood of their Lord, you are from the expelled ones..."[62]

Here one can see that the name 'Rabb' is employed, signifying that this invitation deals with training the human being so that he may attain his perfection.

If one was to carefully ponder over what is obligatory and highly recommended in this holy month, he would realize that Allāh ﷻ out of His overflowing Mercy compelled the human beings to fast and encouraged them to pray so that they may overhaul themselves and start the journey to Allāh ﷻ. Fasting weakens the animal passions and thereby enables the spirit to focus its attention toward the spiritual realms.

In the aforesaid sermon, Imām ʿAlī ﷺ enlightens us with guidelines that would enable us to appreciate and benefit from the Divine invitation of the Holy month of Ramaḍān. Briefly, he tells us to be careful and not to

[62] *Faḍāʾil al-Ashhur al-Thalāthah*, pp. 107-108

waste its days in negligence (ghaflah) and its nights in sleep (nawm), for they are opportunities for us to elevate our spirits. If we are not able to appreciate the highest level of this invitation, which some mystics consider as 'the banquet', we should at least struggle to appreciate the lower levels, which in reality serve as introductory phases for the highest level. And the path towards appreciating the different levels of the Divine Banquet is fasting. The level of fasting, however, is what would determine the 'level of Divine Reception'. Muslim ethicians classify the levels of fasting into three[63]:

1. Ṣawm al-ʿUmūm (the general fast)
2. Ṣawm al-Khuṣūṣ (the specific fast)
3. Ṣawmu Khuṣūṣ al-Khuṣuṣ (the most specific fast)

The General Fast

The general fast is the fast that is obligatory on every one who meets the conditions of fasting. Basically it is to refrain from eating, drinking, copulation, and all those things mentioned by the esteemed jurists in their books of Divine law. To abstain from some of the basic necessities is really a challenge, but its result is so rewarding that it can determine the eternal salvation of the human being. There is a universal law Almighty Allāh mentions in the Qurʾān which despite its brevity reveals a world of meaning. After excusing the traveler and ailing one from fasting in this holy month and allowing them to fast after the holy month, He says:

﴿ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلاَ يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ ﴾

"...God desires ease for you, and He does not desire hardship for you..."[64]

Although this clause is brought after a particular case, it should be known that it applies in every dimension of human life. The ambiguity that remains however is that 'what is the definition of 'yusr' (ease), and

[63] Many scholars of ethics have adopted this classification. Those familiar with Arabic/Persian literature can refer to vol. 2 *al-Maḥajjah* of al-Kāshānī and *Asrār al-Ḥikam* (vol. 2, pg. 568) of Mullā Hādī Sabzwārī.

[64] Holy Qur'ān, 2:185

whether 'one who is healthy' does not feel the pangs of hunger and thirst. To respond to this query, we should look at the following verse:

﴿ فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا. إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ﴾

"For indeed ease accompanies hardship; Indeed ease accompanies hardship."[65]

Most commentators, appreciating the lexical intricacy involved in the verse say that 'difficulty' is interlinked with two kinds of ease- ease in this world and ease in the Hereafter. Or, more accurately, ease in this world, and ease in the realm beyond; the latter, due to our limited comprehension cannot be fathomed, save by one who is endowed with the penetrating sight mentioned in the following verse of Sūrat Qāf:

﴿ لَقَدْ كُنْتَ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مِنْ هٰذَا فَكَشَفْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَاءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ ﴾

"You were certainly oblivious of this. We have removed your veil from you, and so your sight is acute today."[66]

Some traditions clearly state that Paradise can be achieved (only) through the pains and difficulties of worship in this world. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

حُفَّتِ الْجَنَّةُ بِالْمَكَارِهِ، وَحُفَّتِ النَّارُ بِالشَّهَوَاتِ.

"Paradise is enveloped by difficulties and Hell Fire is enveloped by desires."[67]

Imām ʿAlī عليه السلام is reported to have said in a lengthy tradition:

...وَاللّٰهِ إِنَّ صَائِمَكُمْ لَيَرْتَعْ فِي رِيَاضِ الْجَنَّةِ، تَدْعُو لَهُ الْمَلاَئِكَةُ بِالْفَوْزِ

---

[65] *Ibid.*, 94:5-6

[66] *Ibid.*, 50:22

[67] *Rawḍat al-Wāʿiẓīn*, vol. 2, pg. 421

حَتّىٰ يُفْطِرَ.

"I swear by Allāh, surely the fasting one among you enjoys in the gardens of Paradise, and the Angels pray for his success until he breaks his fast."[68]

Observe the tone of the tradition: Imām ʿAlī عليه السلام swears when he informs his true followers about their state when they fast. Many of those who sincerely fast do enjoy these stations in Paradise while they fast, but the curtains that veil them from perceiving the higher realms of existence do not allow them to appreciate this reality. If the curtains were lifted they would witness their exalted state while they still reside in this mortal world.

In the introduction to his anthology 'Shahrullāh fī al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah', when explaining the kind of Divine Banquet that believers should anticipate in the holy month of Ramaḍān, Ḥujjat al-Islam Muḥammadī Ray Shahrī quotes al-Risālah al-Majdiyyah of Shaykh Riḍā al-Isfahānī, where the latter explains the kind of Divine Repast that the believers are invited to. At one point he says:

Indeed I have heard several times and repeatedly from one who is closest to me in terms of relationship and kinship[69] saying: ' I was busy reciting the well-known Ziyārat Amīn Allāh' in the holy sanctuary in Najaf, and when I reached the verse 'wa māwāʿid al-mustaṭʿīmīna muʿaddah" (and the banquets of those who seek sustenance are ready) and reflected over its meaning and thought about it, I was suddenly made to see a banquet on which lay different kinds of food and drinks, which I had never thought of, and I was eating from them, and in the course of that state I was contemplating about an Islamic ruling. Surely it is an amazing state which renders one perplexed! The truth is that this is the reality of [Paradisal] food, which does not break the fast...'[70]

---

[68] *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, pg. 170

[69] It is highly probable says Raysharī, that he is referring to his father who was a well known saint in his time.

[70] *Shahrullāh fī al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah*, pg. 21

Al-Isfahāni later continues[71] saying:

ولا تظنن أنّ تعبيرات هذا العبد هي من قبيل خيالات الشعراء وأوهامهم، أو من شطحيات غلاة المتصوفة، فحاشى أن أتجاوز لسان الكتاب والسنة، أو اتخطى في معتقدي غير ما جاء به الله والنبي وأمر به، وإنما المقصود هو قول الله نفسه في سورة "هل أتى" حيث يقول سبحانه: ﴿ وَسَقٰهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابـــــاً طَهُوراً ﴾

"Do not think that the expressions of this servant resembles the imaginations of the poets and their vain ideas or the theopathetic utterances (shaṭaḥiyyāt) of the extremist so-called ṣūfīs (mutaṣawwifah). I dare not transcend the bounds of the speech of the Book of God and the Sunnah, or adopt a course in my belief that is other than what Allāh and His Messenger brought and ordered [us to follow]. What I only mean here is the word of Allāh in chapter 'Hal Atā' where Allāh Says:

﴿ وَسَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُورًا ﴾

"...and their Lord made them drink a pure drink."[72]

Therefore despite the apparent hardship of fasting, 'the ease that it accompanies' is inexpressible. Those endowed with deep insight also term hunger as the 'the clouds from which rains of wisdom heavily fall'. In his poetic masterpiece of Islamic laws & their secrets called Nibrās al-Hudā, Mullā Hādī Sabzawāri says:

وَالْجُوْعُ لِلْحِكْمَةِ مُزْنٌ مَاطِرٌ.

"And hunger is a rainy cloud of wisdom."[73]

The Specific Fast

The specific fast is a more meaningful fast. In this level, not only does the fasting one refrain from those things that he must avoid during the

---

[71] *Ibid.*

[72] Holy Qur'ān, 76:21

[73] *Nibrās al-Hudā*, pg. 236

general fast, but he also ensures that every member of his body fasts. In fact, some traditions consider this fast as the fast[74] anticipated from the believers. Observe the following narratives:

1. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

رُبَّ صَائِمٍ حَظُّهُ مِنْ صِيَامِهِ الْجُوْعُ وَالْعَطَشُ، وَرُبَّ قَائِمٍ حَظُّهُ مِنْ قِيَامِهِ السَّهَرُ.

"How often is the share of one who fasts, [nothing save] hunger and thirst, and how often is the share of one who stands in prayer [nothing but mere] vigil."[75]

2. Imām ʿAlī عليه السلام is reported to have said:

أَلصِّيَامُ إِجْتِنَابُ الْمَحَارِمِ كَمَا يَمْتَنِعُ الرَّجُلُ مِنَ الطَّعَامِ وَالشَّرَابِ.

"Fasting is to abstain from forbidden acts the way a man refrains from food and drink."[76]

3. Ḥadrat Fāṭimah Zahrāʾ عليها السلام is reported to have said:

مَا يَصْنَعُ الصَّائِمُ بِصِيَامِهِ إِذَا لَمْ يَصُنْ لِسَانَهُ وَسَمْعَهُ وَبَصَرَهُ وَجَوَارِحَهُ؟

"What should the fasting one do with his fast if he did not protect his tongue, hearing, sight and members of his body?"[77]

4. Muḥammad bin ʿAjlān reports from Imām al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام:

لَيْسَ الصِّيَامُ مِنَ الطَّعَامِ وَالشَّرَابِ أَنْ لاَ يَأْكُلَ الْإِنْسَانُ وَلاَ يَشْرَبَ فَقَطْ،

---

[74] *In terms of obligation*, however, the Islamic Jurists unanimously consider the first fast to be sufficient. However, for those who worship Allāh ﷻ to attain His proximity such a fast would not avail them save being absolved from their obligation.

[75] *al-Amālī*, pg. 166

[76] *Ibid.,* vol. 39, pg. 294

[77] *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, vol. 7, pg. 366

وَلٰكِن إِذَا صُمْتَ فَلْيَصُمْ سَمْعُكَ وَبَصَرُكَ وَلِسَانُكَ وَبَطْنُكَ وَفَرْجُكَ، وَاحْفَظْ يَدَكَ وَفَرْجَكَ وَأَكْثِرِ السُّكُوْتَ إِلاَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ، وَارْفِقْ بِخَادِمِك.

"Fasting from food and drink does not merely mean that the human being should not eat or drink; rather when you fast, then your ears, eyes, tongue, stomach, and private parts must [also] fast; and safeguard your hand and private parts and observe silence most of the time save from what is good to say; and be kind to your servant."[78]

5. Imām Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn ﷺ in his prayer on the arrival of the holy month of Ramaḍān humbly prays:

أَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَىٰ مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آله، وَأَلْهِمْنَا مَعْرِفَةَ فَضْلِه وَإِجْلاَلَ حُرْمَتِه، وَالتَّحَفُّظَ مِمَّا حَظَرْتَ فِيه، وَأَعِنَّا عَلَىٰ صِيَامِه بِكَفِّ الْجَوَارِحِ عَنْ مَعَاصِيكَ، وَاسْتِعْمَالِهَا فِيه بِمَا يُرْضِيكَ، حَتّٰى لاَ نُصْغِيَ بِأَسْمَاعِنَا إِلَىٰ لَغْوٍ، وَلاَ نُسْرِعَ بِأَبْصَارِنَا إِلَىٰ لَهْوٍ، وَحَتّٰى لاَ نَبْسُطَ أَيْدِيَنَا إِلَىٰ مَحْظُورٍ، وَلاَ نَخْطُوَ بِأَقْدَامِنَا إِلَىٰ مَحْجُورٍ، وَحَتّٰى لاَ تَعِيَ بُطُونُنَا إِلاَّ مَا أَحْلَلْتَ، وَلاَ تَنْطِقَ أَلْسِنَتُنَا إِلاَّ بِمَا مَثَّلْتَ، وَلاَ نَتَكَلَّفَ إِلاَّ مَا يُدْنِي مِنْ ثَوَابِكَ، وَلاَ نَتَعَاطَىٰ إِلاَّ الَّذِي يَقِي مِنْ عِقَابِكَ، ثُمَّ خَلِّصْ ذٰلِكَ كُلَّهُ مِنْ رِئَاءِ الْمُرَائِينَ، وَسُمْعَةِ الْمُسْمِعِينَ، لاَ نُشْرِكُ فِيه أَحَداً دُونَكَ، وَلاَ نَبْتَغِي فِيه مُرَاداً سِوَاكَ.

"O Allāh, bless Muḥammad and his Household; inspire us with knowledge of its excellence, veneration of its inviolability, and caution against what You have forbidden within it, and help us to fast in it by our restraining our limbs from acts of disobedience toward You and our employing them in that which pleases You, so that we lend not our ears to idle talk and

[78] *Wasā'il al-Shī'ah*, vol. 10, pg. 165

hurry not with our eyes to diversion, we stretch not our hands toward the forbidden and stride not with our feet toward the prohibited, our bellies hold only what You have made lawful and our tongues speak only what You have exemplified, we undertake nothing but what brings close to Your reward and pursue nothing but what protects from Your punishment! Then rid all of that from the false show of the false ostentatious and the fame seeking of the fame seekers, lest we associate therein anything with You or seek therein any object of desire but You!"[79]

The Most Specific Fast

The highest level of fasting is to disengage oneself from other than Allāh ﷻ. Every thought, speech, action, etc. is solely for Allāh ﷻ. The fasting one in this level ensures that not only does he observe the first two levels of fasting, but protects his heart from other than Allāh ﷻ. Perhaps this noble dictum of Imām al-Ṣādiq ﷺ refers to this very station:

أَلْقَلْبُ حَرَمُ اللّٰهِ، فَلاَ تُسْكِنْ فِي حَرَمِ اللّٰهِ غَيْرَ اللّٰهِ.

"The heart is the sanctuary of Allāh; therefore do not make other than Allāh reside in the sanctuary of Allāh."[80]

The result of such a fast is 'the Paradise of Divine Encounter'[81] (Jannat al-

---

[79] Imām al-Sajjād ﷺ, *al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyyah*, sup. 44, pp. 143-144

[80] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 70, pg. 25

[81] Some scholastic theologians being ignorant of the truth of meeting Allāh have resorted to different fruitless interpretations. Āyatullāh Maliki Tabrīzī in his treatise on Meeting Allāh (*Risāleye Liqā'ullāh*) criticizes them, saying: "One who tries to understand with a mind free from foreign ambiguities that penetrate the heart, and looks at these different expressions would be convinced that the meaning of meeting God is not encountering His reward, examples of which are 'entering Paradise', 'eating apples', 'sharing the company of heavenly damsels', etc. How is this meaning related to such expressions? If one can attribute the word *liqā'* to a meaning of remote relevance, what should he do with regard to the other words [used to indicate the encounter of God]? For example, how should he translate the phrase 'looking at God's countenance'? How should we interpret the statement '*wa alḥiqnī binūrika'l abhaj*' (and attach me to your most delightful light)? Can we say that the statement 'And enlighten the eyes of our

Liqāʾ). If we ponder over the supplications of the Holy month of Ramaḍān and try to understand what kind of reception and banquet we can anticipate, we would realize that it is this level of fasting that we must struggle to attain.

Imām Khumaynī in one of his sermons to the seminarians in Najaf al-Ashraf says:

وأَنِرْ أَبْصَارَ قُلُوْبِنَا بِضِيَاءِ نَظَرِهَا إِلَيْكَ، حَتّٰى تَخْرِقَ أَبْصَارُ الْقُلُوبِ حُجُبَ النُّورِ فَتَصِلَ إِلـــىٰ مَعْدَنِ الْعَظَمَة. ضیافهٔ اللّه همان «معدن عظمت» است. خداوند تبارک و تعالی برای ورود به معدن نور و عظمت از بندگانش دعوت فرموده است.

"And enlighten the eyes of our hearts with the light of Your vision, until the vision of the hearts tears through the curtains of light and reaches the Source of Greatness (maʿdin al-ʿaẓamah)."[82] The banquet of Allāh ﷻ is that very "source of greatness." God, the Blessed and Exalted, has invited His servants to enter the source of light and greatness."[83]

He also says:

و جزای چنین روزه‌ای خداست چنانکه فرموده است: أَلصَّوْمُ لِي وأَنَا أَجْزِي بِهِ. چیز دیگر نمی تواند پاداش چنین روزه‌ای باشد. جنات نعیم در مقابل روزه او بی‌ارزش بوده نمی تواند پاداش آن به حساب آید. ولی اگر بنا باشد که انسان به اسم روزه دهان را از مطعومات ببندد و به غیبت مردم باز کند و شبهای ماه مبارک رمضان، که مجالس شب نشینی گرم و دایر بوده وقت و فرصت بیشتری است، با غیبت، تهمت و اهانت به مسلمانان به سحر انجامد، چیزی عاید او نمی شود و اثری بر آن مترتب نمی‌گردد.

---

hearts with the light of their looking at You' means 'to eat pears?'

[82] This is a reference to a part of the well-known whispered supplication of Shaʿbān called Munājāt Shaʿbāniyyah. See *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān*, pg. 158

[83] *Jihād-e-Akbar*, pg. 45

"The reward of such a fast is God, as He has stated: "The fast is for Me and I am its reward."[84] Nothing else could be the reward of such a fast. The Gardens of Blessings would not count as a worthy reward for such a fast. If a man takes fasting to mean closing his mouth to food but opening it for backbiting, and he engages in backbiting until sahar in the warm and friendly company in the nights when there is opportunity and time, such fasting will be of no benefit and have no effect..."[85]

Elsewhere he also says:

در این ماه شریف، که به مهمانسرای الهی دعوت شده‌اید، اگر به حق تعالی معرفت پیدا نکردید یا معرفت شما زیادتر نشد، بدانید در ضیافهٔ اللّه درست وارد نشدید و حق ضیافت را به جا نیاوردید...

"In this noble month, in which you have been invited to the divine banquet, if you do not gain insight (maʿrifah) about God the Almighty nor insight into yourself, it means that you have not properly participated in the feast of Allāh and failed to observe the etiquette of the feast..."[86]

Therefore our aspirations should be high, and we should struggle to attain the position which would enable us enter the Divine Feast. In the supplication of Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumāli, which Imām al-Sajjād عليه السلام taught to his noble companion, we are taught to pray in the following way:

...وَلَدَيْكَ أَرْجُوْ ضِيَافَتِي...

"...And I aspire to be a guest near You..."[87]

---

[84] It should be noted that this dictum is translated in two different ways. From the context of Imām's speech, it is apparent that he reads the dictum as '*wa ana ujzā bihi'* (I am its reward) unlike when it is read as '*wa anā ajzī bihi*' (and I grant its reward). Other divine scholars such as Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī in his *Asrār al-Ḥikam* and Ustād Shujā'ī in his *Maqālāt* [vol. 3, pg. 127] have translated this dictum is a similar manner. Nevertheless, both the meanings are correct.

[85] *Jihād-e-Akbar*, pg. 44

[86] Ibid., pg. 39

[87] *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān*, pg. 194

Notice 'to be a guest near Allāh' is quite different from being just an ordinary guest. In the above verse we seek that kind of insight and knowledge that is obtained ladā Allāh - in the neighborhood of Allāh; In simpler terms, we are not just after any kind of knowledge, but that which is Divinely inspired, which is also known as al-ʿilm al-ladunnī and is, according to the Qurʾān, a product of piety; it is not a knowledge acquired from a human tutor. It is, using the words of the Holy Prophet ﷺ 'a light that Allāh infuses in the heart of whosoever He wishes to guide.'[88] This is the kind of knowledge, say some exegetes of the Qurʾān, that the following verse speaks about:

﴿ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴾

"Be God-wary and God shall teach you, and God has knowledge of all things."[89]

And the path towards achieving taqwā, as clearly specified in the Holy Qurʾān, is ṣiyām (fasting). The Holy Qurʾān says:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴾

"O you who have faith! Prescribed for you is fasting as it was prescribed for those who were before you, so that you may attain taqwā."[90]

Hence, 'fasting' is a factor that can refine the spirit of the human being so much that he can qualify to be taught directly by Allāh ﷻ.

Some supplications teach us to ask Almighty Allāh to be hosted in 'paradise' in this month. In one of the supplications recommended during saḥar time of the nights of the Holy month of Ramaḍān, we ask Almighty Allāh for Paradise:

---

[88] *al-Maḥajjat al-Bayḍā'*, vol. 5, pg. 45

[89] Holy Qur'ān, 2:282

[90] *Ibid.*, 2:283

وَقَدْ أَوْجَبْتَ لِكُلِّ ضَيْفٍ قِرىً، وَأَنَا ضَيْفُكَ، فَاجْعَلْ قِرَايَ **اللَّيْلَةَ الْجَنَّةَ**، يَا وَهَّابَ الْجَنَّةِ، يَا وَهَّابَ الْمَغْفِرَةِ، وَ لاَ حَوْلَ وَلاَ قُوَّةَ إِلاَّ بِكَ...

"...And very you have made obligatory for every guest to be entertained; and I am Your guest; therefore make my banquet tonight to be 'Paradise', O the Bestower of Paradise, O Bestower of forgiveness, and there is no strength nor any power save by You..."[91]

It is possible that the reason why this supplication was followed by the two sublime names of Allāh - 'Yā Wahhāb al-Jannah' and 'Yā Wahhāb al-maghfirah' was to ask Allāh ﷻ for Paradise, and thus, necessarily also ask Him for relief from the Hell Fire, which enables one to enter Paradise. In other words, we are trying to seek the same 'qirā' (meal served to the guest) that we seek in holy precincts of Kaʿbah during the seventh round of our circumambulation around the Kaʿbah. We are taught to say:

أَللّٰهُمَّ الْبَيْتُ بَيْتُكَ، وَالْعَبْدُ عَبْدُكَ، وَهٰذَا مَقَامُ الْعَائِذِ بِكَ مِنَ النَّارِ، أَللّٰهُمَّ اِنِّي حَلَلْتُ بِفِنَائِكَ، فَاجْعَلْ قِرَايَ مَغْفِرَتَكَ...

"O Allāh, the house is Your house; and this servant is You servant; and this is where one who seeks Your Refuge from Hellfire stands; O Allāh, surely I have stopped at Your courtyard; therefore make my banquet to be Your forgiveness."[92]

In fact there is clear mention of seeking salvation from the Hell Fire in many supplications that we are taught to read in the Holy month of Ramaḍān. In the famous duʿā that most of us recite after every prayer, we say:

يَا عَلِيُّ يَا عَظِيمُ يَا غَفُورُ يَا رَحِيمُ...مُنَّ عَلَيَّ بِفِكَاكِ رَقَبَتِي مِنَ النَّارِ...

"O Exalted One, O All-Great, O All Forgiving, O All-Merciful....bless me

---

[91] *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān*, pg. 201

[92] *al-Maḥajjat al-Bayḍāʾ*, vol. 2, pg. 171

with freedom from the Hell Fire."[93]

And during the āʿmāl of laylat al-qadr we are taught to open the Holy Qurʾān and say:

...وَفِيهِ اسْمُكَ الْأَكْبَرُ، وَأَسْمَآؤُكَ الْحُسْنَىٰ، وَمَا يُخَافُ وَيُرْجَىٰ، أَنْ تَجْعَلَنِي مِنْ عُتَقَائِكَ مِنَ النَّارِ...

"...and in it is Your Great Name and Your Most Beautiful Names and that which should be feared and hoped for, that you make me from those whom you have freed from Hell Fire..."[94]

Another very important point to bear in mind is that since these supplications were from infallible masters, the Paradise sought is not that which the laity like the author aspire, but levels beyond.

The mystics have classified Paradise into different levels, the highest of which is Jannat al-liqāʾ (Paradise of meeting the Lord). And this is what a true believer's delight is in. The following prophetic tradition alludes to this verity:

لِلصَّائِمِ فَرْحَتَانِ؛ فَرْحَةٌ عِنْدَ إِفْطَارِهِ، وَ فَرْحَةٌ عِنْدَ لِقَاءِ رَبِّهِ.

"For the one fasting there are two joys: joy when breaking his fast, and joy when he meets His Lord."[95]

Have You Considered the Lovers in the Cave?

Sometimes the Beloved invites His lovers to a banquet and hosts them for a very long duration in the state of 'union' in which state, nothing is beheld save the Beloved. The self also subsides. According to some leading mystics like the late Āyatullāh Shāhābādī - the mentor of Imām Khumaynī in mysticism, the companions of the cave were privileged with such union. In volume 2 of his Rashaḥāt al-Maʿārif, a collection of

---

[93] *Mafātīh al-Jinān*, pg. 176

[94] *Ibid.*, pg. 225

[95] *al-Maḥajjat al-Bayḍāʾ*, vol. 2, pg. 122

transcripts of his lessons, while describing a group of the muqarrabūn (those near to Allāh) he says:

یک دسته از سلسله بشر که مقربین اند لباس بقاء در دار فناء پوشیده، برای تکمیل مردم زندگی می کنند لکن دسته دیگر از همین سلسله در ریاضات و مجاهده حالشان حال جذبه می شود ومثل اصحاب کهف، گمان کنند که مردگانند، نه، بلکه از شدت عشق مجذوب حق شده و از خود خبری ندارند از شدت عشق مدت سیصد و نه سال به آن حال باقیمانده اند و پروردگار بدن آنها را حفظ مینمود تا اینکه مشیت حق تعلق گرفت که از آن حالشان برگردند این مقام ولایت و قرب تام است...

"A group among the human beings who are the near ones of God, clad in the attire of subsistence through God (baqāʿ bi Allāh) in the world of annihilation (fanāʿ), live to perfect other human beings; another faction among the same group (of human beings), however, in their spiritual struggle and exercises are overtaken by the state of Divine Attraction[96] (jadhbah), and like the companions of the cave, are thought by people to be dead; no; rather, out of intense love for God they have been overtaken by Divine attraction and are unaware of themselves; out of extreme Divine love they remain for three hundred and nine years in that state; and the Lord protected their bodies, until He wanted them to come back to their previous state of attention. This is the state of wilāyah (nearness to God) and complete proximity to God..."[97]

These men despite being politically aware and active, were so spiritually elevated, that they were overtaken by Allāh's ﷻ attraction for more than

---

[96] Some of the Muslim mystic saints would fall into such a swoon for a long duration of many days and would then come into realization and attention to this world of plurality. Such a state is narrated about the Egyptian mystic poet Ibn al-Fāriḍ.

[97] Ḥaydar Ṭahrānī (*muʾjizeh*), Lessons of Āyatullāh Mīrzā Mūḥammad ʿAlī Shāhābādī, *Rashaḥāt al-Maʿārif*, vol. 2, pp. 9-10, published by *Intishārāt-e-Payāme Āzād,* first print.

three hundred years, in which state they saw nothing but Allāh ﷻ. They were oblivious of themselves too.

Some authoritative mystics like Imām Khumaynī opine that this state is no more 'a banquet'. Here there is no more guest, host and a banquet. Only the Host remains. Rather, the Host who only was, "is". In one of his sermons Imām Khumaynī says:

"Right from the Holy Prophet ﷺ until the Imām of time (upon whom be Allāh's peace) all were afraid of sinning. Their sin was not what you and I possess. They comprehended such greatness that paying attention to the world of plurality was deemed as a major sin to them. Ḥadrat Sajjād عليه السلام, as has been narrated, would recite the following supplication until morning:

أَللّٰهُمَّ ارْزُقْنِي التَّجَافِيَ عَنْ دَارِ الْغُرُورِ، وَالْإِنَابَةَ إِلـــــىٰ دَارِ الْخُلُودِ، وَالْإِسْتِعْدَادَ لِلْمَوْتِ قَبْلَ حُلُولِ الْفَوْتِ.

"O Allāh I implore Thee to save me from the house of deception and help me return to the abode of joy and provide me with readiness for death before the soul is taken."[98]

This indeed is a great issue. When they consider themselves in front of the Greatness of God, they behold that they are nothing and have nothing. So is the reality. Other than Him there is no one and nothing. When they focus their attention to the realm of plurality, even if that is by Divine command [they consider themselves at fault]. This is the reason why the following saying is attributed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ:

إِنَّهُ لَيُغَانُ عَلىٰ قَلْبِي، وَإِنِّي لأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللّٰهَ فِيْ كُلِّ يَوْمٍ سَبْعِيْنَ مَرّةً.

"In order that my heart should not gather rust, I seek the forgiveness of God seventy times a day."[99]

He enjoyed a different station form that which we possess. They

---

[98] *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān*, pg. 236

[99] *Chehel Ḥadīth*, pg. 342

benefited from the Divine Banquet, and soared beyond that too. They were in the Divine Banquet and because they would comprehend their presence before God and at the same time call the people to the truth, they would sense turbidity in the heart. Paying attention to the manifestations of God, switching the attention from the Unseen to the visible world - i.e. to the Divine manifestations, despite their divine nature, [for they perceive the entities as Divine manifestations] is a great sin [for them]. This is because since the unseen (ghayb) that they seek is 'The perfect connection to God' (kamāl al-inqiṭāʿ ilayk), when they pay attention to the manifestations, it is a great sin...This is an abode of deception for Imām al-Sajjād عليه السلام. Paying attention to the celestial realm [too] is the abode of deception. Paying attention to the realm beyond malakūt also is dār al-ghurūr (the abode of deception). Attention to Almighty God, such that there is no more any banquet comprehensible is specific to the perfect friends of God. In that realm, there is no Divine Banquet any more."[100]

Then Imām Khumaynī pointing to a significant reality says:

"May God make us such that we do not deny these issues. Among the impediments of the path of humanness is to deny the stations of the wayfarers and confine everything to what we commonly comprehend."[101]

And All Praises belong to Allāh, the Lord of the Universe.

Holy Month of Ramaḍān 1425 AH [lunar]
Holy Proximity of Bibi Maʾṣūmah (ʿa)
Qum al-Muqaddasah

[100] *Saḥīfeye Imām*, vol. 20, pp. 267-269

[101] Ibid., pg. 269

Bibliography

Arabic References

The Holy Qurʾān
Adab al-Ḍiyāfah by Jaʿfar al-Bayātī
Al-ʿAdad al-Qawiyyah by Al-ɥillī
Al-Amālī by Shaykh al-Ṭūsī
Al-Anwār al-Bahiyyah by Shaykh ʿAbbās Qummī
Al-Balad al-Amīn by Al-Kafʿamī
Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah by Ibn al-ʿArabī
Al-Iqbāl al-Āʿmāl by Sayyid Raḍī al-ḍin bin Ṭāwūs
Al-Kāfī by al-Kulaynī
Al-Kashshāf by al-Zamakhsharī
Al-Khiṣāl by Shaykh al-Ṣadūq
Al-Maḥajjat al-Bayḍāʾ by al-Kāshānī
Al-Mukhtaṣar by al-Ḥillī
Al-Ṣaḥīfat al-Sajjādiyyah by Imām Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn
Al-Taḥqīq fī Kalimāt al-Qurʾān al-Karīm by al-Muṣtafawī
Biḥār al-Anwār by ʿAllāmah Majlīsī
Faḍāʾil al-Ashhur al-Thalāthah by Shaykh Ḍadūq
Ikhtiyāru Miṣbāḥ al-Sālikīn by Ibn Maytham al-Baḥrāni
Irshād al-Qulūb by al-Daylamī
Madīnat al-Maʿājiz by Sayyid Hāshim al-Baḥrānī
Mafātīḥ al-Jinān by Shaykh ʿAbbās Qummī
Mishkāt al-Anwār by al-Tabrasī
Mufradātu Alfāẓ al-Qurʾān al-Karīm by Rāghib al-Isfahānī
Mustadrak al-Wasāʾil by al-Ḥāj al-Nūrī
Nibrās al-Hudā by Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī
Rawḍat al-Wāʿiẓīn
Riyād al-Sālikīn by Sayyid ʿAlī Khān al-Ḥusaynī
Shahrullāh fī al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah by al-Ray Shahrī
Sharḥ al-Manẓūmah by Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī
Sharḥu Duʾā al-Ṣabāḥ by Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī
Tafsīr Majmaʾ al-Bayān by al-Ṭabrasī
ʿUddat al-Dāʿī by Ibn Fahd al-Ḥillī
Wasāʾil al-Shīʿah by al-ʿĀmilī

Persian References

Asrār al-Ḥikam by Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī
Jihāde Akbar by Imām Khumaynī
Maqālāt by Ustād Muḥammad Shujāʿī
Rashaḥāt al-Maʿārif by Āyatullāh Shāhābādī
Risāleye Nūrun ʿalā Nūr by Āyatullāh Ḥasan Zadeh Amulī
Ṣaḥīfeye Imām by Imām Khumaynī

English References

The Qurʾān with an English Paraphrase (Translation by Sayyid ʿAlī Qūlī Qarāʾī)
Forty Hadiths by Imām Khumaynī (Translation by Martyr Sayyidah Mahliqa Qarāʾī & Sayyid ʿAlī Qūlī Qarāʾī)
The Psalms of Islam by Imām al-Sajjād عليه السلام (Translation of Ṣaḥīfat al-Sajjādiyyah by William Chittick)
EW Lane's Arabic-English Lexicon by EW Lane.

Digital References

The Moʿjam al-Fiqhī [ver. 3.0]
Nūr al-Jinān [ver. 1]
Nūr Jāmi' al-Aḥādīth]

For the past 25 years, the Islamic Education Board of the World Federation has been blessed to be able to translate and author books in English (and other languages) to aide in the spiritual development of the Muslim community. What follows is but a partial list of our titles. For more information or to order these or any other titles, please see our website at **ieb.world-federation.org**.

1. **Title:** Islamic Laws - English Version of Taudhiul Masail
   Author: Ayatullah al-Uzma as-Sayyid Ali al-Husaini as-Seestani
   Translator: Marhum Mulla Asgharali M.M. Jaffer

2. **Title:** A Restatement of the History of Islam and Muslims
   Author: Marhum Sayyid Ali Asghar Razwy
   Translator: N/A

3. **Title:** Al Amaali - Dictations of Sheikh al-Mufid
   Author: Shaykh Muhammad ibne Muhammad al-Nu man
   Translator: Marhum Mulla Asgharali M.M. Jaffer

4. **Title:** Nahjul Balagha Revisited
   Author: Marhum Mulla Asgharali M.M. Jaffer
   Translator: N/A

5. **Title:** The Role of Ahlul Bait in the Preservation of Islam
   Author: Allamah Sayyid Murtada Askari
   Translator: Marhum Mulla Asgharali M.M. Jaffer

6. **Title:** Fiqh and Fuqaha
   Author: Marhum Mulla Asgharali M.M. Jaffer
   Translator: N/A

7. **Title:** Pearls of Wisdom
   Author: Marhum Mulla Asgharali M.M. Jaffer
   Translator: N/A

8. **Title:** The Collection and Preservation of Qur an
   Author: Ayatullah al-Uzma as-Sayyid Abul Qasim al-Khoei
   Translator: Marhum Mulla Asgharali M.M. Jaffer

9. Title: Anecdotes for Reflection - Part I
Author: Sayyid Ali Sadaaqat
Translator: Shahnawaz Mahdavi

10. Title: The Islamic Moral System: Commentary of Surah Hujurat
Author: Ayatullah Ja far Subhani
Translator: Saleem Bhimji
Published in co-operation with the Islamic Humanitarian Service [www.al-haqq.com]

11. Title: Tafsir of the Noble Qur'an : Suratul Jinn
Author: Ayatullah al-Uzma as-Shaykh Nasir Makarim Shirazi
Translator: Saleem Bhimji
Published in co-operation with the Islamic Humanitarian Service [www.al-haqq.com]

12. Title: 40 Hadith: Month of Ramadhan
Author: Shaykh Mirmanafi
Translator: Shahnawaz Mahdavi

13. Title: 40 Hadith: Tabligh
Author: Shaykh Mirmanafi
Translator: Shahnawaz Mahdavi

14. Title: 40 Hadith: Azadari
Author: Shaykh Ray Shahri
Translator: Shahnawaz Mahdavi

15. Title: 40 Hadith: Quran
Author: Sayyid Majid Adili
Translator: Arifa Hudda & Saleem Bhimji

16. Title: Islam and Religious Pluralism
Author: Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhari
Translator: Sayyid Sulayman Ali Hasan
Published in co-operation with the Islamic Publishing House [www.iph.ca]

17. Title: Guiding the Youth of the New Generation
Author: Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhari
Translator: Saleem Bhimji

18. **Title:** 40 Hadith: Prophet Isa
Author: N/A
Translator: Shahnawaz Mahdavi

19. **Title:** Anecdotes for Reflection - Part II
Author: Sayyid Ali Sadaaqat
Translator: Shahnawaz Mahdavi

20. **Title:** Jesus on Ethics
Author: N/A
Translator: Dr. Muḥammad Legenhausen

21. **Title:** Essence of Worship: Ṣalāt [40 Hadith]
Author: Shaykh Ray Shahri
Translator: Shahnawaz Mahdavi

22. **Title:** Lofty Status of Parents [40 Hadith]
Author: Shaykh Ray Shahri
Translator: Shahnawaz Mahdavi

23. **Title:** The Spiritual Journey – Hajj [40 Hadith]
Author: Mahmud Mahdipur
Translator: Saleem Bhimji

24. **Title:** Completion of Islām – Ghadeer [40 Hadith]
Author: Mahmud Sharifi
Translator: Saleem Bhimji

25. **Title:** The Divine Invitation
Author: Muḥammad Khalfan
Translator: N/A

26. **Title:** Manifestations of the All-Merciful
Author: Abū Muḥammad Zanu'l ʿĀbidīn
Translator: N/A

وَقَدْ أَوْجَبْتَ لِكُلِّ ضَيْفٍ قِرىً
وَأَنَا ضَيْفُكَ فَاجْعَلْ قِرَايَ اللَّيْلَةَ
الْجَنَّةَ، يَا وَهَّابَ الْجَنَّةِ، يَا وَهَّابَ
الْمَغْفِرَةِ وَلاَ حَوْلَ وَلاَ قُوَّةَ إِلاَّ بِكَ

...and verily You have made it obligatory upon every guest to be entertained; and I am Your guest, therefore make my banquet tonight to be Paradise; O the Bestower of Paradise, O the Bestower of Forgiveness, and there is no strength nor any power save by You...

Islamic Education Board of the
World Federation of KSIMC
www.world-federation.org

ISBN 1898449783
9 781898 449782
90000>